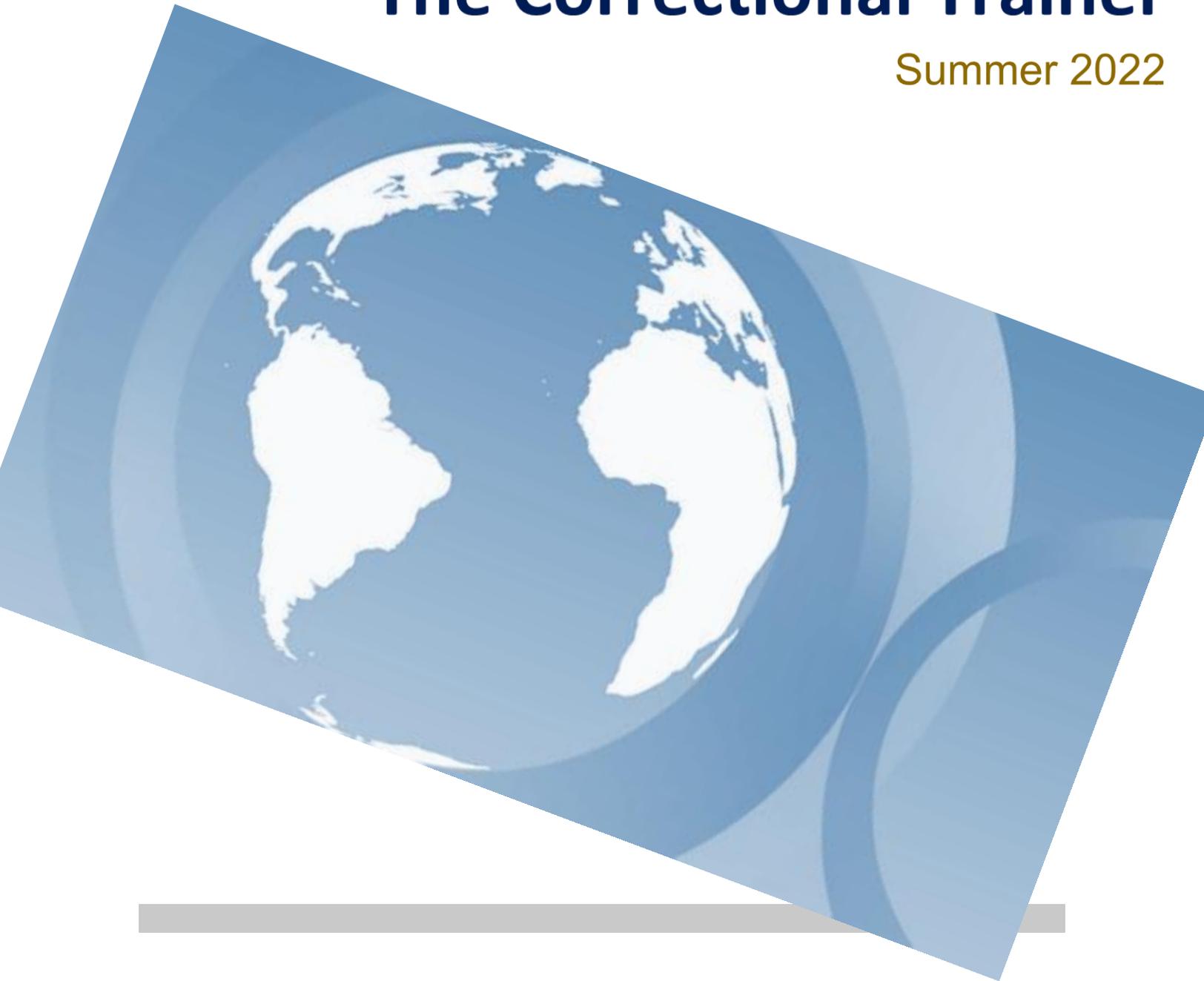




**IACTP**  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
CORRECTIONAL TRAINING PERSONNEL

# The Correctional Trainer

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## **Title: The 4 E's of Transformational Trainings, Part II**

**By John A. Shuford, Editorial assistance from Greg Morton**

You never change things by fighting the existing reality.  
To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.  
Buckminster Fuller

In the first part of this two-part article, we introduced the 4 E's model of training design: Engage, Energize, Empower, and Enjoy. The Immersive Experiential training model uses the principle of 4 E's with its emotional intelligence training.

The foundation of affirmation, respect and caring creates trust and safety within which participants become more open and connection with self and others develops. Participants are able to see themselves and their behavior truthfully. From here, skills of communication and cooperation are taught developing a sense of hope that change is possible. Participants now have the attitude and skills to change themselves which gives them a sense of personal responsibility to make change. The end result of experiencing the Immersive Experiential training is that they, in fact, are changed in the process and they see themselves and others in a new light. When participants see themselves more clearly, they see everything else, including other people, more clearly.

Examples of the training content follow.

### **Training Content:**

**Teambuilding Attitude Conflict Transformation** training: establish safety and build community of trust; attitude skills, which are self-awareness, empathy; personal responsibility [initiative, integrity, interconnectedness with others]; emotional management; communication [listening, assertiveness and problem solving]; conflict styles; stress; and anger.

**Effective Supervisor Skills** training: establish safety and build community of trust; decision making overview; listening; personal conflict management style; the use of power; teamwork; motivation; SMART goals; problem solving; negotiation; mediation; empathy; anger; assertiveness; feedback; and leadership.

### **The goals of these trainings are:**

- Increase Attitude Skills
  - Increase self-awareness resulting in individuals seeing and valuing themselves and others more positively.
  - Increase empathy for others resulting from their increased self-awareness
  - Increase sense of personal responsibility for making positive changes

- Improve emotional management
- Increase Interpersonal Skills
  - Improve listening skills
  - Improve assertiveness skills
  - Improve conflict resolution and prevention skills
- Increase trust in and respect for self and others resulting in a sense of hope that positive change in the work environment is not only possible, but likely, and they want to help make that happen.

### **The Training Process and Design**

Emotional intelligence training is not about content, it is more about experience. Trying to change behavior and relationships by providing information is like teaching someone how to drive a car by having them read a book. It is not very effective. The person needs the hands-on experience of being behind the wheel. This is what immersive experiential training provides. It is 80% experiential and 20% lecture. Many of the experiences convey content in a better way than simply talking about it. Two excellent examples are Fire at Sea and Broken Squares.

Fire at Sea is similar to many survival exercises, except that it has been adapted specifically to corrections. Participants are on a yacht that sinks and they have 15 items to decide the importance of keeping. They rate them individually and then as a small group. What is different with this exercise is that they are asked what their goal was. There are three options: reach land, maximize resources or be rescued. Most will say their goal is to reach land. Problem is, land is too far away, so the only hope is to be rescued. This is then related to work and reaching retirement. Because of the chronic stress of the job, most will not make it to retirement. In order to change this, the work culture must change to lower the stress level. What makes this exercise impactful is that participants had to struggle deciding the importance of the 15 items and then negotiate with others in their small group. The result is that they understand the importance of addressing the work culture. They may have already known this, but now the foundation is set to teach the skills necessary to change the work culture.

Broken Squares is a self-awareness exercise where small groups are given pieces to a puzzle that is not easy to assemble. It can be frustrating and being able to share is key to success. What makes this exercise so powerful is that it is nonverbal and participants cannot talk their way to a solution. Some participants give up and watch, some try to take control and others begin to share. Participants learn a lot about themselves and each other as it relates to what they need to do better to be a team player. There is no way these lessons could be learned other than experiencing them first hand. Now let us look at the training sessions and what they accomplish.

The first session of the training is critical. In this session, the trainer gets the attention of the participants by establishing a container of safety, gaining their respect and showing the importance and relevance of the training to the participants. The trainer introduces

her/himself and gives their credentials/ experience qualifying them to provide this training. It is important not to title this training emotional intelligence, because participants will immediately turn off. Next, review the agenda for the session as this is important for some people's learning styles. Then establish ground rules for how participants will interact during the training. It is important for these to come from the participants themselves, because this begins to create a safe container where they are full participants and that the training is going to be different and not a lecture.

One thing that is important is that all participants are seen as equal, so rank and titles have no place in the training. Emotional intelligence skills are people skills and often, not always, rank and title get in the way of people skills and creating safety. In the training, equality is achieved by everyone taking on an adjective name using a positive adjective coupled with their first name. This signifies that things will be different in this training. There is often some hesitancy in using adjective names, but quickly participants get use to it and fully enjoy it. Some examples are: Just John, Professional Paula, Charismatic Chris and Creative Cathy. These names are used throughout the training. Referring to Capt. Thompson as Brave Bill totally changes the energy and participants begin relating to each other as people and not rank.

There are a couple of exercises focused on self-awareness and connection with others. One is Concentric Circles where participants talk in pairs for a couple of minutes on different topics, such as a positive childhood experience of mine and someone I really respect and why. When a new topic is presented, participants switch to a new partner. It is important at this early stage of the training to avoid topics relating to work. This is intended to be a person to person exchange. After Concentric Circles the energy in the group relaxes and people feel safe, in large part because everyone has shared regardless of their rank or department. This exercise also increases self-awareness, depending on the topics selected. Another exercise that increases self-awareness is one where participants share in pairs what they like about themselves and what they are good at. This can be very challenging for participants, but the benefit is substantial for building trust. Some participants get into this exercise more than others, but all benefit from it. It may be the first time they have thought about the things they like about themselves. Since self-awareness is the foundation for emotional intelligence, these two exercises, or similar exercises are critical to the training process.

During every morning and afternoon session, especially the first, a ten to fifteen minute physically active fun game relaxes participants and keeps the energy up. The fun and laughter experienced builds trust and literally keeps participants' minds open to new learning. One learns much better when relaxed than when stressed. Examples of exercises are a variation on Duck Duck Go where there is one less chair in a circle than participants and one participant stands in the middle and gives a characteristic or experience. Everyone for whom the characteristic or experience applies must move to

another seat and someone else is left standing in the middle. Topics might be everyone wearing blue, everyone who has gone swimming in the ocean and so on.

An overview of communications is given, emphasizing the importance of nonverbal communication; that body language and tone of voice convey much more than the words themselves. At the foundation of nonverbal communication is attitude, which is the most important factor in effective communication. The elements of a teambuilding attitude are discussed in the second session along with the related personal conflict management styles of participants. The specific communication skills of listening [beyond the words], assertiveness [use of I messages] and problem solving are taught by describing, demonstrating and practicing the skills. These skills are presented in the second and third sessions and help the participants behave in a way consistent with and supportive of a teambuilding attitude.

A significant amount of time in the third session is devoted to stress; what it is, its consequences [participants personal experience of it] and approaches and activities, both on and off the job, that can reduce it. Similarly, the fourth session is devoted to anger; what it is, its purpose, its consequences and destructive and productive responses to it. Also, how to de-escalate someone else's anger. Finally, the last part of the fourth session is a trust exercise to demonstrate the trust that has been established within the group, personal contracts on what each participant will do differently [these are not shared with others], and the training evaluation [anonymous], which is always shared with administration.

## **Conclusion**

This Immersive Experiential training is low-tech, not using PowerPoint, but utilizes an easel and markers with handouts. The connection between trainer and participants needs to be direct and not through a computer. When possible, it is good if the trainer participates directly in the early exercises as a participant to establish that she/he is one of them. Having more than one trainer makes this easier. This training incorporates the 4 E's in its design and is consistent with current adult learning principles [Andragogy Theory], which are:

- ❖ Adults prefer to learn from doing/experiences
- ❖ They're interested in learning something that has immediate relevance
- ❖ They prefer a hands-on approach to learning
- ❖ They prefer to solve actual problem

Correctional trainers need to consider the points made in this paper, especially if their agency's staff is experiencing chronic stress. This issue must be addressed if the staff turnover crisis is to be resolved and it cannot be accomplished by approaching it with traditional training methods. As Einstein said, "We cannot solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created it." We must adopt a new approach because staffing issues are not getting better and the strain on existing staff is getting greater and

greater as more staff leave for other jobs. We cannot ignore this issue any longer. Simply put, our current approach is unsustainable.

Increasing pay and benefits will have a positive short-term benefit, but is not an effective long-term strategy. This is because of a psychological process called 'hedonic adaptation', where a person adjusts to a new situation so that it feels normal and not new. Like putting a ring on your finger, after a short period of time, you no longer notice it. For major positive material changes, like increased income, the adjustment process is about three months. This means the emotional boost will last about three months and after that it loses its benefit. Maybe this is a factor in so many staff leaving within the first year of employment. Also, providing information about staff morbidity rates [heart attacks, PTSD, Depression, etc.] and mortality rates, without the means to make the changes in the work culture causing them, may lead to more frustration. These factors may be the 'canary in the mine' giving us notice of an explosive situation.

We need to make our training more humane and at the same time, more effective. Staff must feel and experience emotional intelligence in order for transformation to occur. Like the example given earlier, you cannot learn to drive a car [or a golf ball] from a book. Those agencies that have incorporated the Immersive Experiential model for training emotional intelligence skills have seen huge benefits as a result. More agencies need to include effective emotional intelligence experiential trainings, whether this model or another. An emotional intelligent agency is one where staff feel emotionally safe, supported, empowered, connected, respected and valued. It's time to stop talking or lecturing about emotional intelligence and begin incorporating it within our trainings and therefore, within our agencies.